Sanitary and phytosanitary standards for agro and farm products

243. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:
SHRI R.K. ANAND:
SHRI K.B. KRISHNAMURTHY:
SHRI HARISH RAWAT:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the WTO agreement provide for Sanitary and Phytosanitary standards for agro and farm products;

(b) if so, what is the mechanism to prescribe such standards;

(c) what are the guarantees to avoid such standards from being used as non-tariff barriers; and

(d) what steps are being taken to enhance Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards of the country's exports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) Yes, Sir. The Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures provides for Sanitary and Phytosanitary standards for agro and farm products.

(b) The mechanism for providing such standard is through notifying the new or any amendment in the existing standards to the WTO, in case, these standards are different from the international standards as set by the International Plant Protection Convention (IPCC) or such standards would have significant trade effect.

(c) The SPS Agreement in WTO provides that the Sanitary and Phytosanitary standards are not to be used as non-tariff barriers. In case, the exporter feels that any WTO Member is using these as non-tariff barrier, the Government has the right to ask for the scientific evidences which led to imposition of such Sanitary and Phytosanitay measures. The SPS agreement has been provided with clear and detailed rights and obligations for food safety and plant health measures which affect trade. Countries are permitted to impose only those requirements which are needed to protect health, and these requirements have to be based on scientific principle. The Government can challenge another country's food safety or plant health requirements on the ground that they are not justified by

scientific evidence. The procedures and decisions used by the country in assessing the risks to food safety or plant and animal health has to be made available to other countries on request. This brings in the transparency in the SPS Measures which discourages countries to use SPS measures as non-tariff barriers.

(d) In order to enhance sanitary and phytosanitary standards of the country's exports, following major steps have been taken:

(i) Certification agencies have been established;

(ii) Export Inspection Councils have been strengthened;

(iii) Capacity building exercise of the exporters through trainings, seminars, etc. have been undertaken;

(iv) Duty free import of equipments such as panels etc. for meeting the SPS Standards have been allowed;

(v) Residue monitoring plans for specified commodities are being carried out;

(vi) compulsory testing regimes have been put in place for certain specified commodities before consignment are exported out; and

(vii) exporters are being given financial assistance for quality testing of certain specified exportable produces.

International diamond trading centre in India

244. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY:
SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government is thinking of setting up of International diamond trading centre in India;

(b) whether it is also a fact that India is the largest buyer of diamond roughs in the world;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether Government are thinking of allowing FDI in the diamond exploration; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?